“Mom, dad, look at me”: The development of the Parental Phubbing Scale

# Details

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3289 students aged 15-16

# Abstract

The widespread diffusion of smartphones has opened new challenges regarding the psychological consequences of their usage on social relationships. The term phubbing (a combination of phone and snubbing) indicates the act of ignoring someone in a social context by paying attention to the smartphone. The few existing studies show that phubbing is widespread, mutually reinforced, and socially accepted, with possible negative consequences for social and individual well-being. Phubbing can occur in every social context, including romantic relationships, workplaces, and family. However, to date, minimal attention has been given to the possible impact that phubbing carried out by parents can have on their children. To start filling this gap, in this paper, we introduced a new scale that measures the perception of being subject to parental phubbing and showed the prevalence of perceived phubbing on a stratified sample of 3,289 adolescents. Firstly, the dimensionality, validity, and invariance of the construct were proven. Moreover, our results showed a positive relationship between children’s perceived levels of parental phubbing and their feelings of social disconnection with parents, thus suggesting that the more children felt that one or both of their parents were phubbing them, the less the children felt connected with their parents.

# Outcome

"Generally speaking, the
perception of phubbing was significantly and positively associated with the feeling of
social disconnection from parents. This association held for both the overall measure of
parental phubbing and its source-specific components (i.e., phubbing of mother and
father). Digging into these associations yielded some insights about how parental
phubbing is structured. Phubbing is a construct that primarily emerges in one-to-one
interactions; thus its consequences (i.e., an increase of social disconnection) should be
observed in a specific relationship between two persons (e.g., the adolescent and one
specific parent). This is consistent with our results that showed that the association
between phubbing and social disconnection was significantly higher when both the
constructs were referred to the same parent than when perceived phubbing was referred
to one parent and the feeling of disconnection to the other one. However, the two
relationships considered (i.e., adolescent-mother and adolescent-father) are elements of
the same meaningful social context, namely the family unit. Thus, the relational
dynamics of the two dyads are likely to be influenced by one another, and the dyadic
nature of the constructs at stake might be extended to the larger context of the family,
making it possible to estimate the overall constructs of parental phubbing and parental
social disconnection." (Pancani et al., 2020, p.18)